

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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R 190946Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4985

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 5046

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, MOPS, PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: LAO PROTOCOL NEGOTIATIONS: LPF OFFERS

BEGIN SUMMARY: SENIOR LPF NEGOTIATOR PHOUMI VONGVICHIT HAS RECEIVED NEW INSTRUCTIONS FROM SAM NEUA AUTHORIZING HIM TO MAKE CONCESSIONS IN PROTOCOL NEGOTIATIONS. RLG NEGOTIATOR PHENG PHONGSAVAN IS PRESENTLY DRAFTING COMPROMISE LANGUAGE ON OUTSTANDING ISSUES HOLDING UP SIGNING OF PROTOCOL. THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT HAS GIVEN RISE TO CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM HERE THAT END TO NEGOTIATIONS MAY BE IN SIGHT IF RIGHTISTS DO NOT RAISE NEW OBSTACLES. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING LAST TWO DAYS I HAVE CALLED ON PHENG PHONGSAVAN AND PHOUMI VONGVICHIT TO INQUIRE ABOUT STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS. BOTH MEN CONFIRMED THAT SAM NEUA HAD SENT NEW INSTRUCTIONS TO PHOUMI VONGVICHIT GIVING HIM GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. PHOUMI TOLD ME, JULY 19, THAT HE WAS AUTHORIZED TO MAKE CONCESSIONS IF THE RLG WOULD ALSO CHANGE ITS POSITION ON CERTAIN POINTS.

2. WHILE PHOUMI GAVE FEW PRECISE DETAILS, I OBTAINED IMPRESSION THAT LPF WAS WILLING TO MAKE CONCESSIONS ON POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN RETURN FOR RLG COMPROMISES ON MILITARY MATTERS. SPECIFICALLY, PHOUMI SAID THAT LPF WITHDREW ITS DEMANDS TO SHARE IN CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION.
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TION OF LUANG PRABANG AND VIENTIANE AND ALSO WAS

FLEXIBLE ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS. IN RETURN, LPF EXPECTED RLG TO WITHDRAW ITS PROPOSAL ON STATIONING OF FIXED JOINT LAO TERMS. PHOUMI REITERATED VIEW THAT INSPECTIONS CAN BE CARRIED OUT BY JOINT MOBILE LAO TEAMS.

3. APPARENTLY PHOUMI ALSO SHOWED GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON THE EMPLACEMENT OF STAKES SEPARATING TWO OPPOSING LAO FORCES. PHOUMI SAID HE ACCEPTED SOME RLG SITES AND SAW NO DIFFICULTY ON THIS ISSUE PROVIDED BOTH SIDES CONSIDER ADDING ADDITIONAL STAKES AFTER COALITION GOVERNMENT IS FORMED. AS FOR DETERMINING WHAT AREAS WERE HELD BY WHICH SIDE AT TIME OF CEASEFIRE, PHOUMI SUGGESTED THAT BEST WAY MIGHT BE FOR THE JOINT LAO MILITARY COMMISSION TO INSPECT TERRAIN ON THE SPOT AFTER COALITION GOVERNMENT IS FORMED. IN THE MEANTIME, NO EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO RECONCILE DIFFERENCES OR GRAB NEW TERRAIN. PHENG WAS RECEPTIVE TO THIS IDEA.

4. PHOUMI WAS ALSO WILLING TO SCALE DOWN FURTHER LPF DEMANDS ON THE NUMBER OF LPF UNITS PROVIDING SECURITY FOR LPF MINISTERS IN LUANG PRABANG AND VIENTIANE. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES HAVE ALREADY BEEN NARROWED BY LPF PROPOSAL FOR TWO LPF BATTALIONS IN VIENTIANE AND ONE IN LUANG PRABANG, WHILE RLG OFFER REMAINS AT THREE LPF COMPANIES IN VIENTIANE AND ONE IN LUANG PRABANG.

5. AS FOR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT OF CIVILIANS ON MAIN ROADS AND MEKONG RIVER, PHOUMI TOLD PHENG THAT THSI COULD BE ACHIEVED "AS SECURITY IMPROVES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND SPIRIT OF RECONCILIATION TAKES HOLD." HE WAS NOT OPPOSED TO INCLUDING SUCH LANGUAGE IN PROTOCOL.

6. PHENG PHONGSAVAN'S GLOOMY MOOD LAST WEEK HAS TURNED TO OPTIMISM AGAIN AS A RESULT OF PHOUMI'S SUDDEN CONCILIATORY AND "REASONABLE" ATTITUDE. PHENG, AT THE DIRECTION OF SOUVANNA, IS DRAFTING NEW LANGUAGE ON THOSE ISSUES WHICH HERETOFORE HAVE BEEN STUMBLING BLOCKS AND HE PLANS TO DISCUSS HIS DRAFT WITH THE FAR

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GENERAL STAFF AND NGON SANANIKONE BEFORE SUBMITTING PROPOSAL TO PHOUMI. WE CAN EXPECT THAT ANYTHING PHENG PHONGSAVAN PROPOSES WILL BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE SANANIKONES SINCE THEY REMAIN ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO ANY KIND OF SETTLEMENT. THE QUESTION WILL THEN ARISE WHETHER SOUVANNA, BELIEVING THAT HE HAS OBTAINED MAXIMUM CONCESSIONS FROM THE LPF, WILL BRAVE THE CRITICISM FROM THE RIGHT AND INSTRUCT PHENG

PHONGSAVAN TO SIGN THE IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL. I AM SEEING SOUVANNA TOMORROW, JULY 20, AND WILL TRY TO OBTAIN HIS THINKING ON THIS SUBJECT.

7. DURING JULY 19 MEETING, PHOUMI REPEATED TO ME SEVERAL TIMES HIS WILLINGNESS TO MAKE CONCESSIONS AND COME TO AN AGREEMENT WITH RLG ON AN IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION WHETHER HE THOUGHT LAOS SETTLEMENT NEEDED TO AWAIT RESOLUTION OF CAMBODIAN PROBLEM, PHOUMI EMPHATICALLY OPPOSED LINKING THE PROBLEMS OF THESE TWO COUNTRIES. HE SAID THAT IN LAOS, UNLIKE CAMBODIA, THE TWO CONTESTING INDIGENOUS PARTIES ARE IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH EACH OTHER AND FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES THE FIGHTING HAS STOPPED. HENCE, CONDITIONS ARE NOT THE SAME. HE SAID LPF WAS WILLING TO COMPLETE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND SUGGESTED THAT "PERHAPS LAOS SETTLEMENT CAN SET EXAMPLE FOR OTHER INDOCHINESE COUNTRIES."

8. REGARDING WITHDRAWAL OF NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES FROM LAOS, PHOUMI REITERATED WHAT HE HAD TOLD ME JULY 3, I.E., THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WILL NOT BE IN LAOS 60 DAYS AFTER SIGNING OF THE IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL. IN REPLY TO HIS QUESTION, I SAID THAT OUR SIDE WOULD ALSO LIVE UP TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE AGREEMENT REGARDING THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN TROOPS AND MILITARY ADVISERS. I AVAILED MYSELF OF OPPORTUNITY TO STRESS AGAIN OUR OBJECTION TO ANY REFERENCE BY NAME TO U.S. AND THAILAND IN PROTOCOL. PHOUMI REITERATED LPF DESIRE TO INCLUDE ONE PARAGRAPH IN PROTOCOL ABOUT USG ASSISTANCE TO "BIND THE WOUNDS OF WAR" AND I ARGUES AS PERSUASIVELY AS I COULD AGAINST IT. PHOUMI ASKED, AS HE HAD IN

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PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS, WHETHER U.S. WOULD CONSIDER UNDERTAKING ASSISTANCE PROJECTS IN LPF-CONTROLLED ZONES. I REPLIED THAT I DID NOT EXCLUDE THIS POSSIBILITY AND THAT ONCE LPF ARE MEMBERS OF COALITION GOVERNMENT, THEY WOULD HAVE SOME VOICE IN DETERMINING EMPLOYMENT IN LAOS OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

9. I AM REPORTING MY DISCUSSION WITH PHOUMI RE MIA'S AND CAPTURED CASI PILOT EMMET KAY IN SEPTEL.
DEAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COALITION GOVERNMENT, PARAMILITARY FORCES, COMBAT OPERATIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 JUL 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973VIENTI05046
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P750008-0230
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730721/aaaaapob.tel
Line Count: 164
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28-Nov-2001 by thigpegh>; APPROVED <20-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAO PROTOCOL NEGOTIATIONS: LPF OFFERS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, MOPS, PFOR, LA, LPF, (PHENG PHONGSAVAN), (PHOUMI VONGVICHIT), (SOUVANNA), (PHOUMI NOSAVAN)
To: n/a
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005